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ABSTRACT

This presentation is based on two essays by the author (P. K. Jamison): (1) "Providing Alternative Views of Contexts, Instruction, and Learning in Graduate and Continuing Professional Education Courses in Instructional Development"; and (2) "How Is Instructional Development a Social Practice?". The first essay presents a critical inquiry, qualitative, action research framework for exploring instructional development with teachers, developers, and other professionals; the second provides discourses on the theory and practice of instructional development from a postmodern stance. Both address the question of how instructional development is a social practice. Elements that are impacting society and require educational reform are examined: instability and uncertainty of the future; information technology movement; sociocultural and demographic changes; and lifestyle changes. Three programs and the social practices involved are described, and primary outcomes of a critical/postmodern approach are identified: greater social interaction; improved student and faculty well-being; movement and integration across disciplines; formulation of ideas for action research and innovative projects; improved feedback and communication; desire for social and professional development; increased motivation and commitment to educational activity; empowerment of the educational community to take responsibility and ownership of educational issues; improved environments and leadership; and thoughtful and dynamic educational programs. (AEF)

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Title:

Recognizing the Importance of Critical and Postmodern Possibilities for Instructional Development

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This presentation is based on two of my essays that are currently in press. The first, "Providing Alternative Views of Contexts, Instruction and Learning in Graduate and Continuing Professional Education Courses in Instructional Development,"1 presents primarily a critical inquiry, qualitative, action research framework for exploring instructional development with teachers, developers and other professionals who may work in a variety of disciplines. The second, "How is Instructional Development a Social Practice? Instructional Development in a Postmodern World,"2 provides several discussions on the theory and practice of instructional development from a postmodern stance. Underlying both of these essays and their ideas is a desire for more discussion and activity regarding the social responsibility of our field. Both address the question, "How is instructional development a social practice?"

Instructional development is about people. My work currently, and in the past, focuses on people and their life worlds. I am literally embedded in the lives of others. I experience tension and desire for movement, I sense ongoing contradictions, and have observed a sincere interest in learning about education and its impact on people, environments, and social relationships.

I am concerned that I cannot respond, responsibly or practically, to the question of instructional development as a social practice using the traditional language, models, and ideas of educational technology, and more specifically, instructional development. Instructional development continues to promote models of development whereby a group of well informed developers produce instruction for courses and programs external to the people they are intended for. Education (more broadly), despite attempts to encourage community intervention and participation, and to promote alternative philosophies and programs, is still confined to schools, institutions, and organizations in which educational missions are largely defined by external forces, including economic and political ones.

This should no longer be the case. The very elements (discussed and argued in a multitude of media, journals, and government reports) that are impacting society and require educational reform, are the same elements challenging our profession:

instability and uncertainty of the future
information technology movement
sociocultural and demographic changes
lifestyle changes (including work, school and recreation)

These, apart from information technology, are not new challenges. If we stop and deconstruct the present - we see a part of our past. This is why alternative perspectives and discussions, not just programs and activities, are our responsibility. When our past is present, shouldn't we be responsible and critique that past? Shouldn't we begin to ask, "Who are we now? Does our past help or hinder others?" More importantly, "Who are we responsible for?"

As a professional, I am compelled to be responsive to the life worlds of others, as well as my own. I suggest that it is an imperative that we begin to conceptualize our social practice in the following way:

Instructional development activity is located in a gray area and should conceive of itself as a practice that is not dedicated to solutions, but as a practice that contributes responsibly to the construction of people's educational life worlds; their cultural as well as technical meanings

Having accepted this proposition as the starting point for my own reflection, on the following page I offer examples of my recent work as an educator.

Program	Life world	Social Practices
Residency Program	Medical School undergoing reform: tension, resistance, fragmentation.	Interviewing, listening, negotiating, mobilizing people, educating people, developing communicative relationships through people and media, encouraging sharing and creativity.
State Board of Health	State requiring more rural physicians: fragmentation, lack of information, politics.	Encouraging collaboration, interviewing, integrating people and activities, writing a report based on actual people and events.
Dental School	Dental School preparing for reform: resistance, past experiences (negative), lack of communication, leadership issues, lack of information.	Listening, interviewing, reviewing information and programs, visiting, providing information and support, encouraging.

Primary Outcomes of a Critical/Postmodern Approach: Greater social interaction, improved student and faculty well-being, movement and integration across disciplines, formulation of ideas for action research and innovative projects, improved feedback and communication, desire for social and professional development, increased motivation and commitment to educational activity, empowerment of educational community to take responsibility and ownership of educational issues, improved environment and leadership, thoughtful and dynamic educational programs.

ENDNOTES

1 Providing Alternative Views of Contexts, Instruction and Learning in Graduate and Continuing Professional Education Courses in Instructional Development (Jamison, 1994). First presented at the "Center for Urban Ethnography Conference," Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; revised as a chapter for a work in progress (no book title currently available) on developing courses and programs in instructional development from critical perspectives. For more information on this book contact the editors: Al Januszewski, Pottsdam College, Pottsdam, New York and Rhonda Robinson, Northern Illinois State University.

2 How is Instructional Development a Social Practice? Instructional Development in a Postmodern World (Jamison, 1995). Chapter for a work in press (no book title currently available) on current theory and practice in educational technology. Charles Dills, Editor. Proposed publication date is Fall 1995. For further information contact: Larry Lipsitz, Educational Technology Publications, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey.

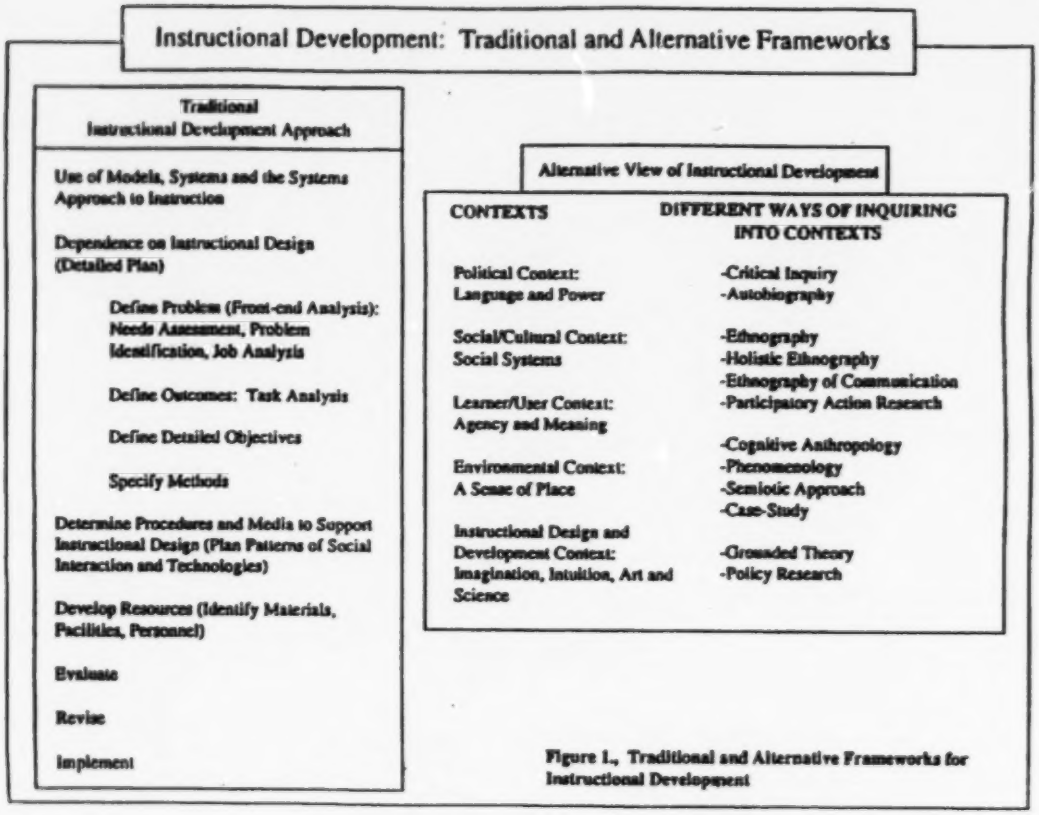

Figure 1., Traditional and Alternative Frameworks for Instructional Development

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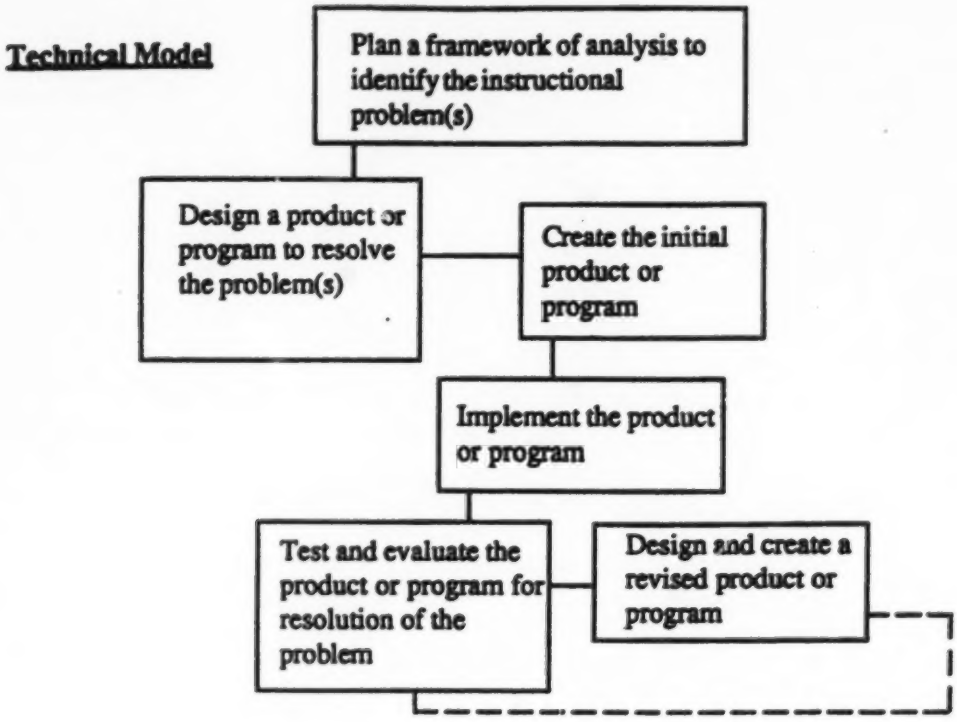
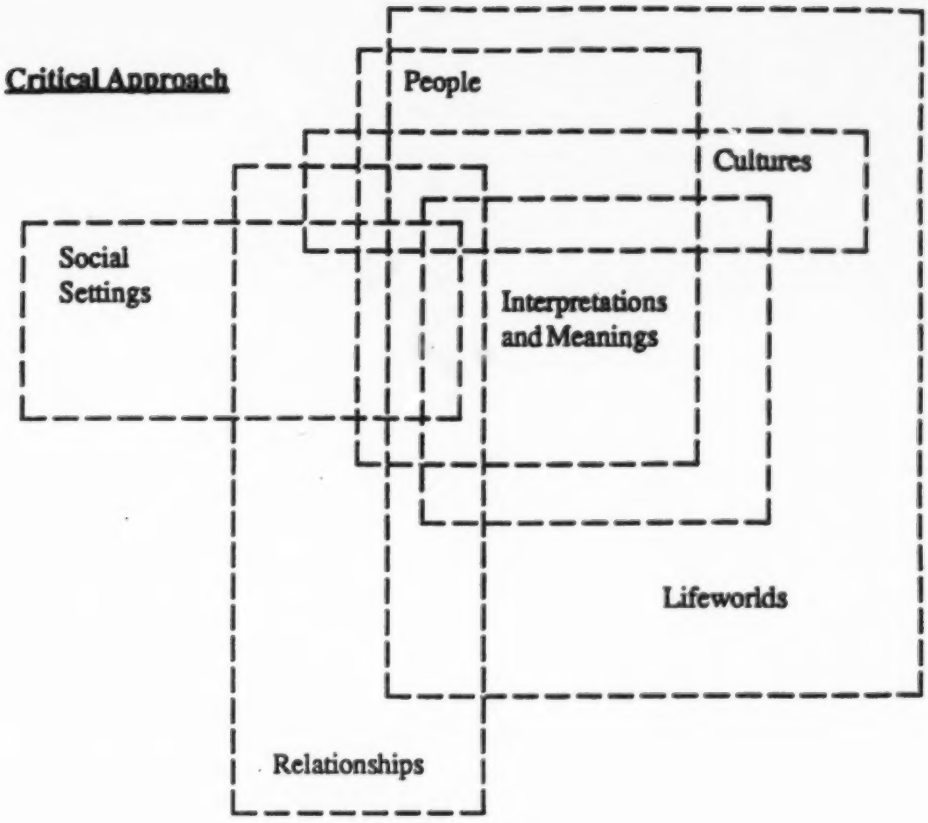

Technical Model
Plan a framework of analysis to identify the instructional problem(s)
Design a product or program to resolve the problem(s)
Create the initial product or program
Implement the product or program
Test and evaluate the product or program for resolution of the problem
Design and create a revised product or program

Associated Concepts

nomothetic (universal law, one paradigm)
reflective of reality
order through differentiation and separation
passive and static
strives for control and homeostasis
surrenders people and settings to "the problem"
monologic discourse
etic view (outsider's perspective)
imposes resolution from the outside
purported to be based on the notion of "naturally occurring systems"
model dictates practice
hierarchical and authoritative
mechanistic
autonomous
based on supposed "objective" reality
products and programs are universal and generalizable to other situations
search for function and example

Figure 1 Technical Model of Instructional Development and Associated Concepts



Associated Concepts

idiographic (case-based)
search for meaning
embraces uncertainty and ambiguity
interpretive and responsive
complementary and contradictory
acknowledges tension and struggle in settings
people, setting and developer are active participants in construction of lifeworld
dialogical and conversational
personal and metaphorical
emic (insider's perspective)
bridges theory and practice
multidimensional
participatory
explores cultural, subjective reality
representative of part of reality (partial)
competing paradigms are viewed as representative of complexity
process focuses on construction and interpretation of meaning
conceptual and multiple meanings possible
local meanings provide understanding
engages through exploration
inquires into the meaning of difference

Figure 2 Critical Approach to Instructional Development and Associated Concepts